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Research Proposal

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A Woman’s Perspective From the Neoclassic Era

It is my hope that through my research, I will be able to reveal the injustices that women of the neoclassic time period were subjected to. Not only that, but to learn from the outlooks of other women with whom I would not normally share like views. Typically being fairly anti-feministic, research of this topic should be helpful in broadening my scope of what women of that day and age had to endure. It will also provide me with an opportunity to practice impartial, unprejudiced writing.

My main question that I want to answer is: How did the attitudes and behaviors of women in the neoclassic era differ with those of us living in present day? How were they alike? I would also like to address: What abuses and injustices were they subjected to? Is it possible to determine the character of the average woman in that period? Were they mentally and emotionally stronger than most women today?

As one of my favorite classes this semester is entitled “Neoclassic and Romantic Period Literature,” it seemed appropriate to choose a topic that I am both interested in, and already learning much about. It is also relevant because in the past I was required to write a paper in favor of a view we personally are against. I disagree with extreme feminism and so that was the topic I wrote about, and based on what I know already, this specific topic is a relative theme. And although I dislike modern-day feministic views, I found myself empathizing with the words of writer Mary Manley; in contrast, I found the views of Mary Astell too radical for my taste. Both women are from the Neoclassic/Romantic periods.

There is much to be gained by studying the writings of female authors in the neoclassic period. It is evident that their abilities and desires were inhibited because their husbands were given total and complete authority over their wives. I feel I should be permitted to pursue this topic because it would expand my sphere of understanding about women’s views in the past and present, and additionally, it would be beneficial to increasing my knowledge of a subject I am currently studying in another class. It is my desire to at least establish a basic tolerance for the views of other women, if not assimilate one or two of them into my own accumulation of ideas. The advancement of feminism is ever-present, but it is my wish to conceivably introduce the idea that what we have achieved now, already, is sufficient. There is only so far feminism can progress before it reaches the point where a woman is exactly like a man. And this is not our Heavenly Father’s desire. Women have their own divine nature and role and it should be embraced. I think it would be prudent to share such a research paper, if done successfully, with my ENG 332 teacher, so as to glimpse her views on the subject, and determine how accurate my examination of it was.

I already have obtained two books that would be sufficient for library research, and it will be rather easy to investigate the topic of women in the neoclassic era online, particularly if I make my focuses Mary Manley and Mary Astell. As far as interviews go, I suppose my taking a class related to the subject makes it more convenient. I could do an interview with my professor or even my classmates, and accumulate their views. Within my class might be the best place to design a survey on the topic as well since the students should be well versed in it.

The first priority while conducting research on women in the neoclassic period would be to consult a reliable site that specifically relates to the topic. I will note the women’s behaviors and beliefs, and also the attitudes of others in respect to women and their rights. I go first to the Internet because it provides fast access, and fast facts and information. To study in more depth, I will consult the texts that I have, and a number of the online encyclopedias. As I do so, I will type up a list of bullets to include in my paper. I will also number my sources with each bullet so it will be easy to return to them when I need to find a quote or fact. I will email my professor and ask her a number of key questions relating to the period and state my reason for doing so. I will also request an interview if possible. I also will post a series of questions to my classmates on our online study board. It will be beneficial to have the perspectives of others to include in my paper. I enjoy clever, well-stated quotes and will type up or copy and paste as many as I can to add some interest to my paper. I will focus on a specific woman of the period (most likely Mary Manley or Mary Astell) and go into greater depth of their experiences. I will also research the views (related to what I find) of women in modern day in order to compare and contrast them. Specifically women who are well-known and outspoken, whether I like them or not. I will consider looking at the views of Sarah Palin, Condoleezza Rice, Hilary Clinton, and perhaps some female writers who might have useful insights. Should the focus on my essay change, I will only concern myself with making sure that the information and relevancies flow, so that I do not lose the attention of my reader or cause them to lose interest in the subject.

Fortunately, I am already in possession of two of the books that will aid me in my research. Should the Internet go down, I am lucky enough to live on campus where there are many networks to borrow from. I also have an Ethernet cord, should the wireless network be interfered with. My husband has a laptop I could use, should mine have issues. The other married couples in my ward are very willing to help whenever they can, and I know of at least two who are also studying English and I would be able to use their insight should the interview with my ENG 332 teacher and/or classmates not work out. If, for whatever reason, I found myself unable to find sufficient information within my two texts or online, I would go to the BYU campus library where I am positive I would be able to find numerous resources available related to my topic. Should I grow incredibly confused or worried, I would consult my professor or even my favorite English teacher in high school, with whom I am in contact. If I decide to change direction in my research for any reason, I would not be too worried because there are many aspects of the neoclassic *and* the romantic periods that could be compared to modern day.

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